

50<sup>th</sup> Texas & Miss. wa 323.2  
SPEECH

OF

MR. DIXON, OF CONNECTICUT,

AGAINST THE

EXTENSION OF SLAVE TERRITORY.

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*Delivered in the House of Representatives of the U. S., Feb. 9, 1847.*

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## THE EXTENSION OF SLAVE TERRITORY.

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### SPEECH.

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The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and having under consideration the Bill appropriating three millions of dollars for the purpose of obtaining Peace with Mexico; to which Bill an amendment had been offered, prohibiting slavery in any territory thereby to be acquired, (Mr. NORRIS, of New Hampshire, in the Chair)—

Mr. DIXON addressed the committee as follows:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: If the gentleman from Pennsylvania, who has just taken his seat, (Mr. BRODHEAD,) is to be believed, the union of these States is about to encounter a new danger—one which never excited the fears of the framers of our Constitution, and against which they had not the foresight to guard. They warned us against sectional divisions—against the influence of foreign Governments in our domestic affairs—against interference with State institutions by the Federal Government—against party spirit; but the danger pointed out by the honorable member from Pennsylvania did not occur to them. He would have us believe, that unless California is acquired and admitted into the Union *as slave territory*, we shall see the bonds of our Confederacy torn asunder, and its shattered fragments exposed to constant collision with each other—perhaps engaged in perpetual war! I trust, sir, that this danger is only imaginary; and that we may refuse the extension of slave territory, without the alarming consequences predicted by the gentleman. He, and those who think with him, seem to have failed to keep up with the progress of the age; they forget the change in public opinion which the lapse of time has witnessed. Even a portion of the northern Democracy—the “*Natural Allies*” of the South, have advanced from the “*Twenty-first rule*” to the “*Wilmot Proviso*.” Discussion of a certain “*peculiar institution*” is no longer suppressed on this floor, and it is now too late for gentlemen to alarm us for the safety of the Union, unless slavery, which, even in this Hall, no longer holds despotic sway, shall be extended to the plains and mountains of Mexico.

But, sir, while by a refusal to extend the limits of slave territory, our Union cannot be endangered, there is great cause for alarm in an opposite policy. The honorable member has not exaggerated our danger, but he has wholly mistaken the source of the peril he predicts. If this great Republic is ever, by any terrific convulsion, to be shattered into fragments, it will be in consequence of attempts on the part of the advocates of human slavery to extend its dominion. Other questions admit of compromise and concession; on this, concession has already gone far beyond the limits of a just moderation, and has degenerated into servility. There is no room for farther concession. Its utmost verge has already been passed.

The war in which we are now engaged, had its origin in the policy of extending our territorial limits, for the avowed purpose of perpetuating slavery. No man pretends to deny, that its primary cause was the annexation of Texas. Without that measure, the war would not have existed. One of the main arguments advanced by the opponents of annexation, when the scheme was first proposed, was the war which would be its probable consequence. That it was not an inevitable consequence I admit, for, after Texas had become a part of this Union, the war might still have been avoided. Having now been commenced, questions of the most momentous importance demand our consideration. If there is wisdom in our councils, all its profoundest lessons are now needed to carry the nation safely through the difficulties which encompass her path. To restore peace, by the wisest and surest means, is our first duty. I deem it to be a duty, scarcely second to this, to provide that the arrogant and encroaching slaveholding oligarchy, which instigated the measure by which we were involved in war, shall not secure, by its final results, their darling object—the further extension of slave territory.

It was not my purpose, in obtaining the floor, to discuss the origin of the present war with Mexico. I cannot, however, pass over this part of the subject, without entering my protest against a doctrine which has been avowed in this House. War exists; and we not only have been told that, while it exists, no voice must be raised to denounce its enormities, but that no inquiry may be made into its origin and cause. He who ventures to ask why, in this Christian age, and by this Christian nation, war is waged, is denounced as a traitor to his country. We have been, sir, in existence as an independent nation only seventy years, and, in that brief space of time, has it come to this, that our Executive may involve the people in a war, into the justice and propriety of which no man dare inquire? It is but lately, sir, in the progress of human affairs, that this principle has been advanced. For the Democracy of this latter day it has been reserved, to declare on this floor, that when once we are involved in war, no matter by what means, the voice of remonstrance must be hushed in utter silence, till the war is over. Men, who call themselves freemen, and who represent freemen, stand here in this assembly of the people's representatives, and argue, that should the President of the United States, by his own act, involve this nation in war, it is our duty to keep silence till he sees fit to end the contest; and that he who inquires into the necessity or justice of the quarrel, is a moral traitor. If there is any thing, after the experience of the last few years, which can shock the people of this country, it should be the avowal of such a

principle. For myself, and for my constituents, I denounce the infamous doctrine. They are represented on this floor by no such miserable slave as he must be, who would shrink from declaring their sentiments. I shall be deterred from the examination of this subject by no terms of opprobrium, which may be showered upon those who dare to oppose executive usurpation, whether they come from the President himself, or his obsequious and sycophantic followers. This is a moment when the country demands the services of its true friends. At this hour of peril, he who fails in his duty is indeed a traitor! Enemies far more dangerous than any foreign foe are in our midst. They are laboring to subvert the foundations of our free institutions; they are swelling the already gigantic power of the Executive; they are perverting the strength of the Republic to the vile purpose of extending and perpetuating slavery, and thus burying the nation in guilt, which years of punishment cannot expiate. I cannot look upon their attempts in silence; I shall render them no aid and comfort.

I have already said, sir, that though the present war was the result of the attempt to perpetuate slavery by the annexation of Texas, it was not rendered inevitable by that measure. It might still have been avoided, by the exercise of that degree of prudence which conducts men safely through the ordinary affairs of life. The folly and weakness of our rulers have involved us in this unnecessary contest, in my judgment, quite as much as the deliberate determination which is usually the origin of war. If it was in the outset a crime, it was not the less a blunder, into which the Administration were deluded and betrayed, by an unpardonable ignorance of the Mexican character, and a consequent contempt of the enemy they were seeking to encounter. Undoubtedly our war-seeking President anticipated an easy triumph—a short and brilliant campaign. Visions of glory haunted his imagination. He had just cowered before “the British Lion, rampant on its cloth of gold,” and he was desirous to prove his spirit on some less dangerous field of battle. Oregon, which he had told the world was ours to 54° 40'; the navigation of the Columbia, which he had solemnly declared he would never surrender; these he had hastened to yield to Great Britain on her first offer to accept them. He began by declaring our title to the whole of Oregon to be “clear and unquestionable;” he ended by consenting to cede away more than five degrees of latitude, and by giving the British Government the right to penetrate to the interior of our acknowledged territory by a river, to which he declared they had not even the shadow of title. One of his most distinguished supporters in the Senate (Mr. HANNEGAN) had pronounced him politically dead and buried, beyond the hope of resurrection, and had sung his requiem. He was desirous, therefore, not only to find some feeble enemy on whom he might prove his prowess, but also to atone to his party, for surrendering what he had called American soil to the haughty demands of a powerful monarch, by extorting an equal extent from the weakness of a neighboring Republic. Our boundaries were to be extended by a few decisive battles, and the acquisition of territory, if not entirely bloodless, was only to be gilded by an easy victory. When, at last, the President discovered his mistake, and learnt, too late, the stubborn, unyielding character of the enemy he had encountered, he was, I think, as anxious for peace as he had been eager for war. Not satisfied with the or-

dinary forms of negotiation, he resorted to means unheard of in the annals of diplomacy. A miserable intrigue with Santa Anna, who was then a refugee in the island of Cuba, was commenced, with the hope of betraying the Mexican nation into an unwilling peace. If ever folly grew from its ordinary littleness to stupendous proportions, it was in this memorable instance. Mexico was then distracted, without a leader, torn by a thousand contending factions; and only one man existed who possessed the magic power to calm her distraction, reconcile her factions, and lead her armies. That man was Santa Anna, and the President of the United States, issued an order to the commander of our blockading squadron, not to interpose any obstacle to his entrance into Mexico!

I call this, sir, folly of no ordinary character—weakness bordering upon imbecility—a proof of incapacity, which would be entirely incredible, if it were not avowed and justified in the President's message. In its results it has been productive of all the mischief which might have been anticipated. Santa Anna is at the head of the Mexican armies, and has infused into the people of Mexico a nationality of which they seemed before entirely destitute. The Castilian blood is now thoroughly aroused, and the war seems likely to be continued for an indefinite period. The spirit which sustained the Spaniards in their seventy years contest with the Low Countries—in their war of a thousand years with the Moors—in their stubborn resistance to Napoleon—in their equally stubborn attempts to subjugate Mexico, seems to have been awakened to new life among their Mexican descendants. We may overrun their country, but can we subjugate its population? The events of the last year do not indicate that we shall find this a task entirely free from difficulty.

The President informs us in his message that the object of the war is not conquest. It seems, then, to be a fruitless, aimless contest, without object, as it was without sufficient cause. For what are we contending, if not for conquest?—for peace? Is there, then, no other mode of stopping bloodshed, than by shedding more blood—no means of putting an end to slaughter, except by continued carnage? Can we have no peace, except by conquest? I cannot but believe that if the intention of dismembering Mexico was now disavowed by the Administration, peaceable relations with that country might easily be restored.

In the prosecution of the war, Mr. Chairman, I see little to command approval in the course of the Administration. It has been conducted by them rather as a partizan than as a national war. Early in its progress, the energies of the President and his Cabinet seemed devoted to the unworthy attempt to injure a war-worn patriot, of whose services they have since been glad to avail themselves. They were then flushed with victory, and were anxious that no portion of the glory, or the spoils of victory should be appropriated by a prominent political opponent. At a later period, Gen. Taylor became the object of the attacks of their partizans. His position before the people of this country had become too commanding, and, in obedience, no doubt, to Executive wishes, a systematic attack upon him was commenced in this House. How successful have been these efforts to injure Gen. Scott and Gen. Taylor, in public estimation, remains to be seen.

But, sir, I will not further occupy your time in discussing the origin, or the prosecution, of the war with Mexico. There is another question which I regard of far greater importance, at the present moment, than the origin of the war, and that is, its termination. The past is no longer within our power. Its evils are, perhaps, remediless; but the future is ours. What course pursued by us will restore peace? For one, if I knew by what means, likely to be adopted here, this war could be brought to a close, I would give my vote for those means. My constituents demand such a vote of me. The Poet tells us that—

“War is a game which, were the people wise,  
Kings would not play at.”

And the people, in whose name I occupy a seat in this House, are too wise to sustain their Government in the prosecution of an unnecessary war. If the white wings of peace can be won back to the valley of the Rio Grande, and the beleaguered cities of Mexico—if our people, who are dying there ingloriously, not by Mexican arms, but by a pestilence which they inhale with every breath of Mexican air, can be restored to their homes by any proper measure which the Administration propose to adopt, I must give it my support. The President informs us that, with the sum of three millions of dollars, peace can be obtained. I fear he is mistaken; but, for the sake of peace, I am willing to see the experiment tried. We can but lose the money, at the worst; and if it is to be added to the immense sums already squandered in this war, it will not greatly swell the amount. For nothing but peace would I vote to place this sum of money in the President's hands; but if there is a bare possibility that it may be the means of producing so desirable a consummation, I should be unwilling that my vote should prevent it. I shall, therefore, vote for this bill, with the proviso of the gentleman from Pennsylvania, (Mr. WILMOT,) prohibiting the existence of slavery in any territory to be acquired by treaty from Mexico. With that proviso, I can vote for the bill; without it, it cannot have my support, under any circumstances. And this brings me to a subject of immense importance, on which I propose to address some remarks to this committee.

It seems now to be supposed, that the acquisition of territory, in some mode, is to be the result of the war in which we are engaged. The appetite for territorial aggrandizement grows with the food it feeds on, and the enlargement of our borders, by the annexation of Texas, is to be only the precursor of still greater extension.

But by conquest, with my consent, this extension can never take place. I would not wrest from the Mexican government one foot of her soil, under any of the low, dishonest, dishonorable pretexts, by which a war of conquest may be attempted to be justified. If we are to have new territory, let it be peaceably won, not torn from the Mexican Republic by conquest. I deny the justice of any such title. Ours is a Government founded upon reason, justice, truth, virtue, religion. It presumes the capacity of man for self-government, and its great idea will never be realized until the people, who are the foundation of its power, acquire ascendancy and dominion over themselves. To such a conquest we may well aspire, and, when that is achieved, the spectacle will not again be exhibited to the world, of a republic founded upon the arts of peace, and holding itself forth as an example.

worthy of universal imitation; yet plunging into a war of conquest, and carrying fire and sword into the heart of a neighboring republic. The President assures us that conquest is not the object of the present war. I was glad to hear from that source such a declaration. It is an acknowledgment from a quarter whence it was least expected, that such a war would be unworthy of our people—of the age in which we live. Whether this declaration of the President be consistent with his acts is another consideration. If conquest be not his object, his California expedition seems to be wholly without motive or end. But, I am not now disposed to question his sincerity on this point, choosing rather to coincide in the opinion he virtually expresses, that a war of conquest is unworthy of our arms. For the first time since the commencement of our national existence we are engaged in a war not defensive. The war of the Revolution was defensive. It was waged on our own soil, and the struggle was to repel invasion. Our second war with Great Britain was of a similar character. The conquest of foreign territory was no part of the object of either of those struggles. Heretofore we have been invaded. Now we are the invaders. No hostile foot presses our soil—our cities are not threatened—our harbors are not blockaded—our commerce is not obstructed—our fields are not reddened by the blood of the slain. The war which we are waging is in a foreign country, where our own eyes cannot see the woes which our armies have suffered or inflicted. Yet, says the President, the war is not one of conquest. Be it so.

But territory, we are told, is to be acquired. Our object is not conquest, although New Mexico and Upper California, being convenient and desirable acquisitions, are to be ours! But on what terms? After Mexico shall have been compelled to relinquish her claim, or shall have freely assigned it for a valuable consideration, there still remains a party to be consulted. The people of the North have a question to raise on this subject, and their views are embodied in the proviso of the gentleman from Pennsylvania, (Mr. WILMOT.) Shall this territory, in which slavery has now no existence, continue free; or shall it, like Texas, be doomed to the curse of perpetual slavery? That, sir, is now the question; and on that the people of the North are watching, with anxious attention, the votes of their representatives on this floor.

I think I know the sentiments of a portion of the northern people. I speak only for my immediate constituents, and I tell you, sir, that they wish to hear no argument, and to make none, on this point. They have fully considered the question in all its bearings, and their minds are made up. They never will consent to be instrumental in extending slavery over territory where it does not exist. Look, sir, at Mexico. While the true principles of liberty seem imperfectly understood by the people of that country, yet human slavery is there unknown. No slave can breathe in those fertile valleys, or on those table-land mountains. Human flesh is not there the subject of property; but the great republic of the world—the model government—the home of freedom—the asylum of the oppressed, proposes to extend its empire over that vast realm, and straightway it is to become, what it is not now, a land of slavery! Sir, this cannot be. Those who threaten us with a dissolution of the Union, unless we consent to this, mistake the intensity of the feeling which pervades the North on this subject. The



danger to the Union is from another aspect of this question; fear will show.\*

\* To show the southern sentiment on the subject of slavery, the manner in which it is defended by *Bible arguments*, and the determination of southern representatives to extend it to territory hereafter to be acquired, I quote the following from a speech delivered in the House of Representatives, by Mr. A. D. Sims, of South Carolina, on the 28th of January, 1847 :

"It is supposed, said Mr. Sims, that this slave question is the most dangerous of all others. Sir, no man who reads his Bible, and who is a Christian, either in theory or in practice, can denounce slavery as immoral. Who does not know the history of this abolition movement in Christendom? The very first step taken by the French Encyclopedists for overturning the authority of the Bible, was to publish to the world—and they made the French people believe it—that slavery was wrong in principle; and then that the Bible from one end to the other was the advocate of slavery. The conclusion was inevitable that the Bible was wrong in principle—that the Bible was a fable, not to be believed—and that the religion that stood upon it, recognising and allowing slavery, must be wrong. No man, who is a Christian, can denounce slavery as immoral. In the laws of Moses, slavery is introduced and provided for; slavery is recognised throughout the Bible. It is, therefore, useless to say that a heresy, resting upon this flimsy foundation of infidelity, can produce these dangerous results which gentlemen speak of. I believe in the abiding good sense and Christianity of the American people; that they will not rise—in the face of Providence and in contempt of the laws of the Bible.

"Upon the whole, then, said Mr. Sims, Mr. Chairman, I have undertaken to show to the committee that we have but two alternatives in reference to the prosecution of the war: either to withdraw our troops and yield to the Mexicans all our conquests, and acknowledge we are unable to prosecute it, or to prosecute it with vigor, until we conquer the peace for which it was undertaken. I think I have shown that the war was just and necessary; that it was not waged for conquest, but in accordance with the laws of nations, as recognised under the Constitution of the United States, whenever a war exists in this country; that we have a right to make conquests, to occupy the country, to establish provisional governments, and to seize upon even more than is necessary to indemnify us for the injuries we complain of and the expenses of the war. I have also attempted to show that, should it be necessary, we may rightfully, and without any great danger, looking to an overruling Providence and to the patriotism of our people, permanently occupy this country. And I have no doubt—I express the opinion here—that every foot of territory we shall permanently occupy south of thirty-six degrees thirty minutes, will be slave territory.

"Mr. Burr here interposed, (Mr. S. yielding,) and desired to ask his colleague whether he had expressed the opinion that the country conquered from Mexico south of 36 degrees 30 minutes would be occupied with the slave institutions, in consequence of the state of public opinion in the northern, western, or middle States? Or whether it was in consequence of the known determination of the southern people that their institutions shall be carried into that country if it be acquired?

"Mr. Sims, (in reply.) It is founded on the known determination of the southern people that their institution shall be carried there; it is founded on the laws of God, written on the climate and soil of the country; nothing but slave

And here let me state what I understand to be the feelings, the opinions, the settled purposes of the people of Connecticut on this subject, so far as I am authorized to speak for them. While they detest every form of human slavery; while they look upon it as it exists in some of the States of this Union, as an evil of enormous magnitude, not only to the slaves whom it degrades below the condition of brute beasts, but to the masters who hold them in bondage, yet they do not claim, and have never claimed, the power to interfere with State legislation on this question. They understand their own duties and rights with regard to it. They know how the Constitution of this Union was formed. They value the Union; they respect the Constitution. Their duty under it they will never fail to fulfil to the letter and the spirit. Whether, if the subject were now open, they would consent to its compromises on the subject of slavery, I deem exceedingly doubtful; but to the Constitution of the United States as it is, they will be faithful.

Further than that they cannot go. While they understand that they have no power to interfere with southern legislation upon slavery, they also understand that neither the letter nor the spirit of the Constitution requires them to aid in extending the "peculiar institutions" of the South. They wish those institutions, while they exist at all, to continue *peculiar*, and will have no part in the unholy work of making them *universal*. When you ask them to leave to your own legislation your own evils, they cheerfully acknowledge your right to control the destinies of your own people, responsible only to God. But when you ask their aid, in subjecting the fairest portion of the earth to the foulest curse which ever stained humanity, they meet you with a decisive answer. Much as they love the Union which binds together these States—ardently as they hope it may be perpetual—they would sooner see the Confederacy riven asunder, than steep their souls in the guilt of extending the dominion of slavery. If it is to be perpetual—if it must extend its empire—if mankind must be subject to its curse, wherever American enterprise shall carry American power and civilization throughout the world, we wash our hands of the stain. The wrong must be perpetrated without our instrumentality—in spite of our determined, unceasing resistance.

This, sir, I think, is the feeling of all parties in the State of Connecticut. I believe it is the universal feeling of the North. Those northern men with southern principles who resist it on this floor, and betray their constituents upon this vital question, have a fearful responsibility. Too long the North has been betrayed. The stand which I trust will be taken now, ought to have been taken on the question of the annexation of Texas. Public opinion has at last assumed a fixed and determined character. You see it, sir, in its effects here, in this Hall. How long is it since the question of slavery

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labor can cultivate profitably that region of country. *I have no idea that the North or the West will resist to the death.* This Union will never be dissolved on that question.

"Mr. Wood, of New York, here interposed, and protested against the gentleman answering either for the North or for God.

"Mr. Sims. I answer for God, because this opinion is written in his revealed word. I can speak authoritatively upon that point."

could not be discussed in this chamber of the Representatives of the people? Even the right of petition was denied, and the voices which should have been raised in defence of human liberty, and in stern, determined defiance of the dictation, which, not satisfied with black slavery at the South, demanded also the subserviency of white slavery at the North, were hushed in silence. That day has passed away, never to return. Where petitions, couched in suppliant and humble terms, were not permitted to come, eloquent and fiery denunciations are now heard. Such, sir, is the progress of public opinion. The men who boasted of being the natural allies of the South, are now denying their allegiance. Southern gentlemen will find their mercenaries can no longer be trusted. The people have taken up the subject; and from that State whence, a few years since, came the meekest assurances of slavish submission, now swells, loudest and loftiest, the proud determination of freemen. Yes, sir, New Hampshire, whose Representatives on this floor dared to deny to northern freemen the right to present their petitions to Congress, in relation to slavery, was the first State to resent the wrong of the admission of Texas with a constitution perpetuating human bondage. I call on southern gentlemen to take notice of the onward march of the free sentiment of the North. Let them not rely on their "natural allies." It is no longer their interest to affect a regard for southern rights, which they do not feel. Mark their course, and determine what shall be your policy with regard to the acquisition of new territory, before it is too late. If you depend on them to aid you in extending slavery, you will be disappointed. They dare not go with you. The subserviency by which they gained your confidence, has given way before a danger nearer home, and, therefore, more appalling than your menaces. Your reliance on them will be unavailing. Instead of the "21st rule," they now offer you the Wilmot proviso.

The feeling which pervades the North, on the subject of slavery, is not one of sickly sentimentality. While the system of human bondage which prevails at the South, is considered in the highest degree unjust and oppressive to the slave, it is believed to be hardly less injurious to the master. It is, besides, disgraceful to us as a nation; disgraceful to the age in which we live, so far as those of the present age are responsible for its existence and continuance. Circumstances beyond our control have fastened it upon a portion of our country. It is an inherited evil, and no man is farther than I am, from a spirit of uncharitable denunciation of the South, for the existence of a misfortune to which they are born. How they shall deliver themselves from this evil, is a problem which I confess myself unable to solve; though I am sure that the violence with which they have been assailed by their northern brethren, cannot aid them in coming to so desirable a result. But, sir, while I know not how slavery can be removed from those States where it is now in existence, unless it be by the voluntary efforts of those most interested, yet I think I can see how its extension can easily be checked. Let it be understood and solemnly covenanted, beforehand, that in those regions now almost uninhabited, which it is proposed to add to our territory, involuntary servitude, except for crime, shall never be permitted. Can the South object to this?

The honorable member from Georgia, (Mr. COBB,) who spoke this morning, insisted that the spirit of the compromise of the Constitution, required us to consent to the extension of slavery over any territory which might at any time thereafter come under our rule. Because seventy years ago—when the region now perhaps to be acquired was unthought of, unexplored, almost undiscovered—our fathers consented that persons held to service should be represented in the Congress of the proposed Union, not by themselves but by their owners, thus creating a representation of property; and because it was further agreed, that such persons held to service and escaping into any State, should be returned to their owners; therefore we are bound to *extend* this slave representation, not only over Texas, but throughout New Mexico and California, and are to become also a community of slave-catchers for those countries! I deny that the spirit of the Constitution exacts from us any such concession. What the Constitution demands, we will perform. We shrink not from its requirements while the Union exists. Show us what is “nominated in the bond,” and we will perform it. If the Constitution has been already violated, if its spirit has so far left it, under the violence to which it has already been subjected, in the admission of a vast region for the avowed purpose of perpetuating slavery, that it is little better than a lifeless body, still, by no assault from us shall its dissolution be hastened. We would cherish it and restore it, if possible, again to life; certainly we would not hasten its end, nor prevent its dragging out to the latest possible day its feeble existence. The State of Connecticut has always respected its mandates. It has never been wounded by her assaults. Let me give you, sir, an example of the respect which she has always paid to the Constitution of the Union, while in some other States, it has been made only a pretext for defending wrong and denying right. She enacted a law giving to fugitive slaves the right of trial by jury, in the year 1838. At the session of her Legislature held in 1844, it appeared that a similar law, passed by the Legislature of New York, had been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States. What then, sir, was the course pursued by Connecticut? Did she attempt to nullify the decision of the Court? Did she refuse to conform her legislation to the Constitution of the Union, as promulgated by its supreme judicial tribunal? No, sir, she submitted in respectful silence, and repealed her own law in deference to the opinion of the Supreme Court, and for no other reason. She believed, no less than before, that the immutable principles of justice required the enactment of the law in question, but she also acknowledged, that while she continued a member of this Union, her Legislature had no power to pass a law, which conflicted with the letter or spirit of the Constitution of the United States. While her law was in itself just, she considered it null and void, when it was declared so to be, by the competent tribunal, and therefore it was repealed. Such, sir, is the respectful deference to the Constitution, which pervades the State of Connecticut. I could wish, sir, that some of the States, who in the hour of danger are glad to find refuge under its protection, were equally willing to respect its authority, when its provisions rebuke their assumption.

The Constitution of the United States, neither in its letter nor its spirit, requires us to consent to the extension of slave territory. We are at liberty

to treat it as an open question, to resume the capacity of choice, which under the Constitution we have relinquished, where slavery exists by its sanction, and to decide whether, being thus free to choose, we will consent to be made parties to the extension of a deplorable evil. Viewed in this light, can southern gentlemen complain, that while we respect their rights, we revolt at the idea of inflicting upon a land, blessed by Heaven with every natural advantage, a curse which will render all these advantages comparatively worthless?

What, sir, let me ask, is the effect of slavery, wherever it exists? We have examples among our own States, which furnish a reply to this question. Contrast Virginia and Pennsylvania. In natural advantages Virginia is superior to any State in this Union. Her climate is the most favorable to the perfect development of human excellence, on the globe. Her cold is not excessive—her heat is not intense. The breezes which sweep over her valleys, softened by the rays of a genial sun, and purified by her mountains and forests, unlike those of other mild climates, bring physical enjoyment, without enervating the frame. Her soil, though exhausted in many portions of the State by a false system of cultivation, is sufficiently fertile. Iron and coal abound in all her hills, and she has water power in abundance. Yet she is a worn out, decaying State. Her people are emigrating to regions less favored by nature. Pennsylvania, with certainly no greater natural wealth, and a harsher, more repulsive climate, has far outstripped her in wealth and population. What has made them to differ? Can any one doubt that slavery is the incubus which has crushed the energies of Virginia, and marred her beauty, in the very morning of her youth, with the wan decrepitude of old age?

If California is to be ours, shall we inflict a similar doom upon its future inhabitants? We are told that nature has done more for that region, than even for Virginia. It would seem, if some descriptions of its soil and climate are to be credited, that the bounty of nature has been almost exhausted in rendering it the most favored region of the globe. If all be true which we read concerning it, the world has mistaken the schooling necessary to make men, if that soft climate, and too easy soil, is the spot on which a bold, hardy, independent race may be expected to win true greatness under any circumstances. Rather on the cold hills of New England, should I expect to find the enduring frames, and powerful intellects, which are to uphold the glory and freedom of our nation. But if a too bounteous nature in that region, so tempting to our cupidity, allures to idleness—if the mildness of its climate, and the fertility of its soil endanger the character of the people who are to inhabit it, what will they become when enervated by slavery? Who, that regards the future prosperity of that favored country, can desire to plant there an institution, which will inevitably make it worse than an unpeopled desert—the home of an enfeebled, idle, luxurious, effeminate race of men? Without labor, there can be no manly strength in any community; and there will be no labor in California, or elsewhere, without the necessity of labor. It was to create this necessity, and to ensure the results which would follow, that the earth was made to bring forth thorns and briars spontaneously, while the food of man must be extorted by ceaseless industry from its unwilling soil. The primeval curse has thus become one of our richest blessings. To exempt the future white population of Califor-

nia from the necessity of labor, by providing an abject race, who shall perform it in brutal degradation and trembling fear, will be the greatest curse we can inflict upon that country.

But we are told that the discussion of this question at this time is premature; that we should first obtain the territory, before we consider by what policy it shall be governed. It is too early, say the advocates of slavery, to form a resolution on this subject. I remember, sir, that they said something very similar to this, when the question of the annexation of Texas was before this House. It was, then, *too early* to talk of providing for freedom in that territory. Wait, said the slaveholders of the South—wait, echoed their white serfs from the North—wait till we make sure of Texas; there will then be ample time to discuss the subject of slavery. Their policy was adopted; the resolution providing for annexation was passed, with a promise, which satisfied the easy consciences of the “natural allies,” that a satisfactory compromise line should be laid down, beyond which slavery should not extend. At the last session of Congress we saw the sequel. Texas had, as a State, framed a constitution which *prohibited* the abolition of slavery by her own Legislature—thus perpetuating human bondage by all the means which her sovereignty enabled her to command. What was the action of the House when that constitution came up for consideration? The whole of Texas, the north as well as the south, was admitted as a State, with a constitution prohibiting its own Legislature from abolishing slavery within its own limits. And this outrage, sir, was committed under the operation of the previous question, without debate. No member here, with the exception of the eloquent and distinguished representative from the Berkshire district of Massachusetts, (Mr. ROCKWELL,) was permitted to raise his voice in remonstrance. Did gentlemen find it was then too early to discuss this subject? No, sir, *it was too late!*

The perpetuation of slavery, in the manner I have just described, was accomplished by northern votes. Let it never be forgotten that, by the aid of the Representatives of the free States, the South has always succeeded in maintaining its ascendancy. Almost thirty years ago, John Randolph, of Roanoke, drew for us a picture of the men who have abandoned the principles of the North, and bowed in humble subserviency to southern dictation. Hear him.

*“We do not govern you by our black slaves, but by your own white slaves. We know what we are doing. We have conquered you once, and we can again. Aye sir, we will drive you to the wall; and when we have you there once, we mean to keep you there, and nail you down like base money.”*

The “northern men with southern principles” who have given to this sarcasm the biting sting of truth, I hope, will never again have the power to betray the cherished principles of their people. It is not that nearly all the patronage of the Government has been monopolized by the South, that we of the North complain. That wrong we can patiently bear, and we are never disposed to harbor sectional prejudices; but when we are called on to consent, that the power of the Government shall be perverted from its original design, to the wicked purpose of extending and perpetuating slavery, even where it has now no existence, we answer that we shall submit to no such wrong; and the northern men, who, in the hope of gaining some personal benefit from the slave power which controls the Gov-

ernment, abase themselves, and those they represent, to the condition of "white slaves," have a doom awaiting them which I will not attempt to describe.

Let us take warning from the past. The North must not again be deceived and betrayed. She must be heard, before this territory is acquired. I call on gentlemen from the South to consider this question in all seriousness, before we shall be so far committed in the acquisition of territory, as to render a difference of opinion a source of extreme peril to our Union. Do they wish to see a revival of the Missouri controversy? If, even then, before this subject had every where been agitated, the Union was convulsed from its extremities to its heart, what tempestuous commotion may we not now encounter, in the renewal of such a controversy? There was then only one man who could calm the raging of the storm; and though he is still living, he will not be here to raise his head above the fury of the waves, and hush them into silence. Will gentlemen persist in forcing the ship of state into the perils which seem to await her? Why rush madly into this appalling danger? As we now are, in spite of misrule—in spite of war—we are comparatively prosperous. Why seek out a danger which we may far more easily avoid? It hardly needs the dictates of wisdom, to keep us from the destruction which we seem almost to court. Folly itself could scarcely fail to mark and avoid it. Nothing but fatuity unparalleled in the annals of the world—the utter infatuation with which, we are told those are blinded who are predestined to destruction—can prevent our deliverance from the danger to which I allude.

We of the North are determined, at all hazards, to oppose the extension of slave territory. The South is equally determined that, whenever our boundaries are extended, south of the line of the Missouri compromise, there slavery shall go. While this continues an abstract dispute, it will be as harmless as other abstractions; but when it regards the settlement of a practical question, then comes the hour of danger. Will gentlemen, then, refuse to decide this question now? There is now a compromise, on which we can unite. When the territory is ours that will no longer be possible. The compromise is this: To abstain from the acquisition of territory—be satisfied with our own limits, and relax the insatiate grasp with which we have laid hold on Mexico. Our Union may thus be saved from the perils which await us, if the question of slavery in new territory, is hereafter to be discussed. Let us discuss it beforehand; and if we cannot agree upon our future policy, let us at least agree to continue as we are, in respect to territorial limits. Rather than run the risk of a dissolution of the Union, let us stand by the Union as it is. If we cannot agree as to the question of extending slavery where it does not now exist, we cannot too early discover the strength and determination of the opinions which divide us. The opinions of the North are fixed and firm as the decrees of fate. Those of the South seem to be not less decided. Let us pause, then, before it is too late.

The people of the slave States committed a grave error in attempting to defend their institutions by extending slave territory. They should have been satisfied with the protection of the Constitution; but having succeeded in their designs, so far as to bring in Texas as a slave State, it is time for them to be told that they can go no further. Without the aid of the recre

ant representatives of the free States, who prostrated themselves in humble servility before the haughty and arrogant demands of a slaveholding oligarchy, they could not have succeeded in their designs. This cannot again happen. The spirit of the North is at last thoroughly awakened. The determination that the foot of a slave shall never tread on any inch of territory hereafter to be acquired, is a principle, fixed, like their religion, in their hearts, in support of which they are ready to make any sacrifice. I know that you of the South are equally determined. Your spirit is no less firm than ours; and every imaginary right of yours will be maintained with your utmost power. What must be the result? Can any thing but fraternal blood appease the fury of that contest? Is it to precipitate such a fate that we are now urged to the conquest of Mexico? Shall we, to gain a territory for which we have no use, light up the flames of civil war at home, and desolate the glorious inheritance won by the blood of our fathers? No, sir. Let us rather abandon all ideas of conquest, and return to the arts of peace, by which we have heretofore advanced to glory and happiness. Not for us is that false honor which is won on the field of battle. The mission of our republic is peace. Our boundaries, if extended, must advance by peaceful conquests, and the footsteps of liberty must keep pace with the flight of our eagles. The error which two hundred years ago planted slavery on the Atlantic coast, if it cannot now be wholly retrieved, must never be extended to "where the sun, with softer fires, looks on the vast Pacific's sleep."

Mr. Chairman, I am astonished when I hear gentlemen advocate the extension of their peculiar institutions to regions where it has now no existence. Slavery to be extended! New life to be breathed into it by the aid of northern freemen! Let me say to these gentlemen, that the day is not far distant when, instead of being extended, it will die where it now exists, and be buried to rise no more. Justice, truth, advancing civilization, the resistless force of human opinion, all the light which nearly two thousand years of Christianity have shed upon the world, are leagued against its life. Yet gentlemen talk of subjecting boundless regions, soon to be inhabited by untold millions, to the empire of this ancient wrong, which, "wounded and writhing in pain," is "dying amidst its own worshippers." Little do they know of the progress of human opinion, who hope, in spite of its power, to perpetuate a system by which the immortal soul of man is made the subject of property—a mere personal chattel. By some means our republic will be delivered from the reproach of slavery. I hope it will be by the free consent of our southern brethren. But, in some way, liberty, though late, will come at last. I hope it may not come through carnage and devastation—that its approach may not be lighted by the flames of civil war, kindled by the frantic struggles of an infatuated slave power to extend the area of its dominion.